

POST-MORTEM PROBATION,

OR

HOPE AFTER DEATH.

A REPLY

TO A LETTER PUBLISHED IN THE *WING* OF
DECEMBER 12TH, 1881.



And the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly. Rom. v., 20.

Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them. GAL. iii., 10.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. GAL. iii., 13.

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PRIMITIVE'S LETTER.

From the British Whig of December 12, 1881.

SIR,—I was disappointed in the letter on "Post Mortem Probation," recently published in your paper. From the introduction of Mr. Wisdom I was expecting a discovery whereby wicked mortals might, in another world, obtain that purity necessary to qualify them for admission to the abode of the blessed. But I find that after his years of careful study the only conclusion he has reached is to find fault with what the Almighty Ruler of the Universe in His word has made known to us mortals, and so he is as much in the dark as ever. This is very disappointing, especially to those mortals whose actions will not bear close inspection. If such a scheme was prepared in the Divine economy there would have been some mention of it. Not a word can be found in the Bible to encourage such a theory, but most emphatically do the Scriptures point out two places in the future. In Matthew xxv., 31st verse to end of chapter, and in Revelations xx., 11, we have a description of the last judgment from the lips of the Judge who, surely, should be qualified to speak on this important subject. The court consists of Christ and His angels. All nations appear before Him. There is no exception. Both small and great have their trial, and sentence is passed according to their conduct; and from this judgment there is no higher court or appeal. No mention is made of any being reserved for a fresh trial of doing better. On reading the parable of the tares, Matt. xiii. chap., 37 verse, we will find the time when this scene will take place, also the causes that place the inhabitants of this world in their several positions. Two kinds of seed are sown, producing fruit harvested at the end of the world. The angels are the reapers. Nothing is said about making good out of the tares. I cannot agree with Mr. Wisdom when he states that Protestant Churches are at variance with the teachings of Scripture, neither can he, in the face of the facts I have referred to, show that there is inconsistency or absurdity about the orthodoxy of what those ungracious preachers teach. He who has stated has power to make good

what He asserts, or heaven and earth must pass away. Mr. Wisdom attempts to build a theory for future probation upon an idea he has formed of the injustice that would be shown to those who have not had a knowledge of the Gospel if they should be punished without having an opportunity in another world. Man is not in that helpless condition Mr. Wisdom would place him. Christ by His death on the cross and resurrection has provided salvation for all mankind. One of these blessings is the divine influence of the Holy Spirit which is working in the hearts and consciences of all mankind, prompting them to that which is good, and if they follow the light which they have they will be saved. Saint Paul in the 1st chap. Romans, 18th, very fully describes the cause of man's alienation from God. They lived their own evil ways and hated that which was good, so God left them to follow their hearts' lusts, which brought upon the world the divine vengeance in various ways. The Jewish nation was the centre of the known world and shed the influence of the true God upon the nations of the earth, but they rejected the Light and were destroyed. Christ sent forth His disciples to make known the Gospel to all the earth. Their march was rapid, great was their success, so that in a few years every part of the then civilized world had a knowledge of the Gospel. But men rejected the truth and the result is that to-day there are dark places on the earth, and the crescent is where the cross was first unfurled. The Jews rejected Christ and they are to-day a standing monument of divine vengeance. Mr. Wisdom had better, before he again attempts to express his thoughts about the actions of Deity, follow the advice given by the Apostle James in the 1st chapter. "If man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to every one abundantly and upbraideth not."

October, 1881.

PRIMITIVE.

REPLY OF JOHN WISDOM.

Go ye and learn what this meaneth. I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.—
MATT. ix. 13.

SIR,—I have examined the letter which appeared in the *Whig* of the 12th December, but I am sure that the majority of its readers will agree with me that "Primitive," as my opponent styles himself, has subjected my name to a more severe criticism than he has my arguments. I presume that he found he was unable to effectually crush my doctrine by attacking each argument in succession, so he just thought that he would have a good joke by ridiculing my name. I think he is in the position of a person who is drinking the milk of the Word, but not able to digest the strong meat thereof. I think that the Gospel of the Grace of God has been preached a sufficient length of time to men to enable them to be weaned from the milk of the Word. It is high time now that men should partake a little of the strong meat, that they may be able to give good logical reasons for the hope that is in them to all those sceptics who are multiplying so fast at present. I am not at all surprised that infidelity is propagating itself so much in the world as it is; indeed, I would be more surprised if it did not take a firm hold of men's minds seeing that infidelity is continually having sounded in its ears by those professing to hold the truth in righteousness so much that is directly repugnant to the dictates of reason no less than to conscience. My opponent accuses me with finding fault with the Word of God, but I assert that I am not doing so; but I am finding fault with the present system of theology, which virtually confines all the operations of the Spirit of God to this life, and which gives us narrow and unworthy views of God as our Redeemer. Mr. Primitive asserts that I cannot show that there is inconsistency or absurdity in the theology of Protestantism when it denies the existence of an intermediate state. I think I can make it clear that a denial of an intermediate state involves a denial of some of the most emphatic declarations of the New Testa-

ment. If my opponent is so grounded and settled in his illogical creed as to be impervious to conviction, then

"More powerful proof shall take the field against him,
Stronger than death and smiling at the tomb."

He tells me that not a word can be found in the Bible to encourage such a theory as mine, and he brings into the field against me the great ultimate decisions of the last judgment, and he says "from this judgment there is no higher court of appeal." Very true. Certainly I do admit that there will be no higher court of appeal than this. But is this the only judgment mentioned in the Scriptures? Observe what St. Paul declares in his 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, v. chap., 10th verse:—"For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (I am quoting from the revised version in this letter, because it gives the proper renderings of the original Greek.) Here we discover another judgment antecedent to the final judgment. Note now the distinction existing between Him who sits on the throne of the last judgment and Him who sits on this judgment seat. We perceive that the decisions of the Judge at the last judgment will be absolute and final if we look at the 11th verse of the 22nd chapter of Revelation:—"He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still." Now we see also that this passage is placed at the very end of the Revelation, which fact explains to us that there will be an absolute fixedness of things posterior to the day of judgment. Now, on the other hand, we perceive that the Judge who sits on the judgment seat of which Paul speaks is a High Priest also. In Hebrews, 5th chapter, first three verses, we are told that the high priests under the Mosaic dispensation bore gently with the ignorant and erring, and in the preceding chapter, 15th verse, we read:—"For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Now I want to ask any man of good judgment if I am not drawing a just inference when I assert that all those who die in a state of ignorance of the Gospel of Christ are dealt mercifully with when their spirits come before the judgment seat of Christ. Surely if anything gives us a glimpse into the counsels of God the above passages do. God has not left us in absolute ignorance of His dealings with us when we leave this world. I am sure I can prove to the entire satisfaction of the most of men the truth of these assertions I am making. In the 21st and 22nd verses of the 5th chapter of St. John we read:—"For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth

them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." Now Christ in His earthly life has manifested to us forbearance, long-suffering and tender mercies far exceeding all that our reason or sense of justice would have anticipated. Take one of the many examples of His judgment—the woman taken in adultery. What a striking exhibition of forbearance on the part of One who being without sin must have regarded it with the utmost abhorrence. "Neither do I condemn thee." Christ has taken just the same kindness to heaven with Him that He had upon the earth, and possesses far more power to save now than He had then, according to the words of St. Paul, Romans v., 10:—"For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." My opponent must have failed to see the gist of my theory, or he never would have selected the parable of the tares and wheat to prove that my arguments are indefensible. He says:—"Nothing is said about making good seed out of the tares." Now, because the parable does not state in plain terms that some of the tares may become eventually good seed, Mr. Primitive rejects all the other passages of Scripture that do declare that some of the tares have been brought into the fold of Christ. I want to ask Mr. Primitive if the Apostle Paul previous to his conversion was not a most rank tare growing among the wheat? Now we find Paul declares the reason that God was merciful to him in I. Timothy, i., 13:—"Howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Mr. Primitive declares that man is not in that helpless condition in which I would place him. He says:—"Christ by His death on the cross and resurrection has provided salvation for all mankind," and also that "the Holy Spirit is working in the hearts and consciences of all mankind, prompting them to that which is good, and if they follow the light which they have they will be saved." Now in my first letter to the *Whig* I did not assert that men who are living in the knowledge of the will of God in Christ are in a helpless condition, but I asserted that all those who had no knowledge of the Gospel of Christ (not only those who lived before Christ, but after as well) are in a helpless condition, and will remain in that condition until they come to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. This is virtually the basis on which all of my arguments in support of the post-mortem probation theory rests. My opponent cites the 1st chapter of Romans as a proof that God has consigned all those people to perdition who followed the inclinations of their carnal minds, and he tries to persuade me that they were just as guilty in the sight of God as men are now at the present time who are living in the knowledge of the duties which God requires of them and

neglect to perform them. In the 32nd verse of this 1st chapter of Romans we read:—"Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." Here is the testimony of the Word of God that those people who followed their lusts in their ignorance are placed under the curse of the first death. There is no intimation given here of the second death. I will just quote some passages which show the difference which God makes between sins that are committed in ignorance of the doctrines of Christianity and sins that are committed when men know them: "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—Heb. ii., 2. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"—Heb. x., 26, 27, 29. In the 6th chap. Hebrews, 4th, 5th and 6th verses, we read also:—"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." I want to ask my opponent how many of the people who lived from Adam till the appearance of Christ were enlightened in the manner spoken of here, and how many were made partakers of the Holy Ghost? Now we know positively that none of the people before Christ, not even the best of them, ever received such a knowledge of the truth. (See I. Peter, read from 1st to 13th verse.) And farther, there have been millions of people since Christ who were in precisely the same state. These passages imply that those who sinned against the Mosaic law and those who sinned when conscience was the only moral governor were still within the bounds of God's mercy and were not absolutely cast away, and if they were not, where were their spirits consigned when they departed this life? They could not be admitted into heaven, because we read in Revelation xxi., 27, that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie." Neither were they so wicked as to be consigned to the lake of fire and brimstone, for Christ declares that there is none lost but the son of perdition (St. John xvii., 12), and in II. Thessalonians ii., 4, we have the nature of his sin revealed:—"He that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that

is called God or that is worshipped." If there is need for any additional proof to show that these arguments are worthy of credence we have it in the 6th chapter of Revelation, 8th verse:—"And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him." Now this is the identical place that Christ spoke about when he prophesied to Peter that the gates of Hades should not prevail against the Church of Christ, founded as it is on the faith—the faith that works by love. If the lake of fire and brimstone follows the first death immediately, why is it not written that instead of Hades? Surely the infallible Spirit knew how these things ought to be written. Perhaps some people will claim that Death and Hades mean the same thing, that is, simply the grave, but the 20th chapter of Revelation, 13th and 14th verses, proves that Death is a natural and Hades a spiritual state:—"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire." As the first natural death has power over our bodies; so likewise Hades has power over our spirits, providing that we are under the law of sin and death. If, however, the law of the spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin and death before we die, I believe our spirits are not imprisoned in the Hades, but pass into a state of happiness until the first resurrection, after which event our glorified bodies, being again united to our spirits, we will receive our full reward, according to the 12th verse of the 22nd chapter of Revelation:—"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is." I apprehend that this is the meaning of Christ's saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." Christ did not mean that a true Christian would never see the natural death and corruption which is the common lot of all, both just and unjust, but He meant that Hades (that spiritual state that follows the first death) has no power over the spirits of true believers, because they have passed from death (Hades) unto life. In the 18th verse of the 1st chapter of Revelation we read:—"And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Now those keys signify that Hades is a prison wherein the spirits of all those who die in a state of ignorance of the will of God are confined until they give substantial proof of sincere repentance. I believe, therefore, that when those spirits repent unto life they are liberated from this prison, and pass into that state of happiness of which I have just spoken, and remain there until the first resurrection. I am not inventing any strange doctrine, but am express-

ing my firm belief that this is the truth according to the Scriptures. I am not denying the doctrine of eternal happiness for the righteous nor the doctrine of eternal punishment for the wicked. Most positive am I that there will be two places in the future, viz., Heaven and Hell. But I believe that future will be posterior to the last judgment. This middle state I believe intervenes between the creation of Adam until that time arrives spoken of by St. Paul in I. Corinthians xv., 24:—"Then cometh the end, when he (Christ) shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." (See also Revelation xi., from 15th verse to the end.) I am sure it argues an excessive amount of self-conceit on the part of my opponent to assert that I am "finding fault with what the Almighty Ruler of the Universe in His Word has made known to us mortals, and that I am as much in the dark as ever." This is as much as to claim that he is the repository of all knowledge of spiritual things, the central sun which is to dissipate all the clouds that hang around our spiritual vision. However, such things as these are quite natural to expect on account of the present system in vogue in the Christian Church. Each denomination has its own articles of faith, formulated by fallible men, and requires its ministers to sacrifice all their conscientious convictions to those articles. This is not according to the spirit of Christianity, but is at variance with the precepts of Christ and His Apostles. God has given man both reason and conscience, and has placed no obstacles to the free exercise of each; therefore the sooner the Christian Church learns this and acts upon it the better it will be for the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth. It is the will of God that the Word of the Lord may run and be glorified (II. Thess. iii., 1), therefore it is a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for the Church to impose on her ministers any other rule of faith than the Word itself.

In conclusion, I must say that I am as positive that there is a state of probation after death for all those who do not get a knowledge in this life of the grace of God in Christ as I am positive that we are now in a state of probation who are living under that knowledge. I am only granting to the ignorant what God has granted to us, viz., a knowledge of His will in Christ. The truth of this confronts me every time I read the 32nd verse of the 11th chapter of Romans:—"For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all." My opponent advised me to ask God for more wisdom, therefore I will just advise him to profit by the injunction of Solomon:—"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."—Proverbs iv., 7.

JOHN WISDOM.

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